

# Utah urged to become energy leader

By Amelia Nielson-Stowell Deseret Morning News

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PARK CITY -- **Utah** should be a role model in using renewable energy, and government leaders should help the public to find alternative energy solutions, according to state and local officials who spoke on a panel Friday.

"It's incomprehensible to me as a state official that we do not obtain sustainability and be a leader in the nation," said House Minority Leader Ralph Becker, D-Salt Lake.

"We're moving forward. But we are way behind where we should be. We are way behind most other states, and we are way behind where we should be, looking at the incredible resources we have in the state."

Becker, Park City Mayor Dana Williams and the governor's energy adviser Laura Nelson spoke on leadership in renewable energy on a panel Friday at a conference organized by the Uinta Headwaters Resource Conservation and Development Council. The council is a nonprofit group made up of representatives from government and businesses in Summit, Utah and Wasatch counties. The group focuses on working to retain the natural and scenic attributes that make the counties attractive for recreation and living.

Becker said he and Rep. David Ure, R-Kamas, spent time last year working on an energy policy for the state. Becker said Utah is moving forward in obtaining renewable energy but is still far behind the rest of the nation.

Williams said that Utah cities, however, can be a model by focusing on renewable energy at a local level.

Nelson added that in Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr.'s annual recommendations to the Legislature, he hopes to promote using renewable energy through programs such as reinstating corporate energy-tax credits, developing an alternative energy fund and offering incentives for those who use alternative fuel.

"The governor fundamentally believes that bringing on more renewable energy is key to mitigating rising gas prices," she said.

Both Nelson and Becker said Park City and Williams are local leaders for the cause. The ski town has converted its transit fleet to biodiesel fuel and uses wind power for electricity.

In addition, Williams said, a new building for the police department is being built with a unique cooling and heating system that saves energy, and the city started a green-building program for local residences.

Williams added that the alternative-energy discussion needs to move away from partisan politics. If anything, the various sides must realize the United States needs alternatives to its dependence on foreign oil.

"A lot of that technology is viable, and we just need to start getting people to think about it," he said. E-mail: [astowell@desnews.com](mailto:astowell@desnews.com)